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ISRAELIS SET TO RELEASE 300; U.S. OPENS DIPLOMATIC DRIVE TO 'ISOLATE' BEIRUT AIRPORT

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 1 — The United States announced today that in response to the hijacking of a Trans World Airlines plane last month by Lebanese Shiite fundamentalists, it was beginning a diplomatic campaign "to isolate" Beirut International Airport.

There was no sign that any immediate military action would be taken. Reagan Administration officials said they were holding in reserve several military options in response to the hijacking, but that diplomacy would be pursued first. [Page A6.]

Meeting at White House

After a meeting at the White House of President Reagan and members of the National Security Council, a senior State Department official said Mr. Reagan had decided, as a first step, to end air service to the United States by Lebanon's two air carriers, Middle East Airlines and Trans Mediterranean Airways, a cargo carrier.

Secretary of State George P. Shultz said tonight that "the purpose is to place off limits internationally that airport until the people of Beirut place terrorists off limits."

In an interview on the Public Broadcasting Service program "The MacNeil-Lehrer Newshour," Mr. Shultz said the United States had identified the two men who hijacked the plane on June 14 and killed a Navy diver, Robert Dean Stethem. He said the Justice Department would discuss the matter with Lebanese officials.

Mr. Shultz said the hijackers would be brought "to justice, directly in Beirut or, if they wish, in other ways."

Asked about the prospects of apprehending the hijackers, Mr. Shultz said the case would be a "test" of Lebanon's desire to restore itself "to civilized society."

Terry Eastland, a Justice Department spokesman, refused to comment on the department's action on the matter.

Indictment Possible

Legal experts said the hijackers could be indicted in the United States for committing crimes aboard a United States aircraft overseas. A 1984 Federal criminal law, for example, makes it a crime to hold United States nationals hostage anywhere in the world.

The main problem would be getting custody of the hijackers to put them on trial. International agreements could be cited by the United States in demanding that Lebanon put the hijackers on trial there or extradite them to the United States, even though the countries have no extradition treaty.

Any effort by the United States to seize the hijackers by force without Lebanon's consent to bring them to the United States for trial, or to kill them, could violate international law and raise other legal problems, the experts said.

Action on Air Carriers

The senior State Department official said no American carriers would be allowed to fly to Beirut and that other nations would be asked to follow suit and bar Lebanon's airlines from their airports as well. He said an international agreement would be sought that would deny landing rights in participating countries to any nation extending such rights to Lebanon's airlines.

Other Administration officials said the primary emphasis in coming months would be on increased international cooperation in such areas as intelligence sharing and air security.

Further actions will await the return on Thursday of Vice President Bush, who has been in Europe discussing international cooperation in fighting terrorism.

Administration officials have been asked repeatedly in the last two days about possible American retaliation for the hijacking, for the holding of the American hostages for 17 days by a Shiite militia and for the slaying of the Navy diver. The Administration insists that it made no promises in order to secure the Americans' release, and that in particular it has not ruled out military retaliation.

On the other hand, Administration officials have pointed out that military action would be difficult because they are not sure where the original hijackers are. The senior official said today that recent reports asserting that American intelligence had firm information on the hijackers was erroneous.

Syrian Assistance Sought

Another reason not to take military action now, officials said, is a hope that Syria, which used its influence to help free the 39 hostages, will be able to secure the release of seven other Americans who are officially listed as missing or kidnapped in Lebanon.

Mr. Reagan, who has had several exchanges with President Hafez al-Assad of Syria in recent months, telephoned him today to thank him for his efforts on behalf of the American hostages who were freed on Sunday and to urge him to continue seeking the freedom of the other seven, an Administration official said.

In discussing the efforts to close Beirut's airport, the senior official said, "We are discussing with other governments the termination of all air transport to and from Lebanon and to terminate landing rights for any nation whose airlines continue to fly to Lebanon." He said there had been no preliminary discussion so far with others, and he declined to predict their reaction.

Mr. Shultz had signaled this action on Sunday, after the 39 hostages from the T.W.A. plane had been freed, when he said at a news conference that "Lebanon, and Beirut airport, has dramatized itself as an outcast by its actions in the world community."

He said 15 percent of all international hijackings outside the United States over the last 15 years "have either originated, ended or gone through the Beirut airport."

"The Beirut airport has become a kind of safe haven to terrorists," Mr. Shultz said. "And certainly it's one of the things that we, and other countries, must consider. As long as Beirut is a haven for terrorists, it should not be a place frequented by the world community."

"We are going to be in touch with our friends about the airport," he said. "We hope to develop a concerted pattern of action. At any rate, we have a very clear view about that airport, and I've expressed it here."

In its official statement, the State Department said: "The United States is taking legal action and diplomatic steps to isolate Beirut International Airport and to encourage other governments to take similar steps."

The announcement by the State De-

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partment of the initial action to "isolate" Beirut's airport was mocked by some reporters who asked the senior State Department official what effect today's actions would have on curbing hijacking. One reporter pointed out that at the time the T.W.A. plane was hijacked, the Beirut airport was closed, and was opened only at the appeal of the T.W.A. captain.

The official's response was that the Beirut airport had come under increasing control of radical factions and that it was hoped that an international effort would prompt the Lebanese Government and other factions in Lebanon to take control of the airport and bar its use as a haven for hijackers.

Beirut International Airport is south of the Lebanese capital in an area populated largely by Shiites. It has been closed for months at a time in the past because of shelling in the region.

Currently it is under the control of the Shiite movement Amal.

The only airlines currently flying to Beirut are Lebanon's own carriers. Until today's action, Middle East Airlines has flown twice a week to New York. Other carriers have had the right to fly to Beirut but do not because of the lack of security there.

The Administration's strategy, as outlined by Mr. Shultz and Robert C. McFarlane, the national security adviser, is to galvanize public opinion for firmer actions against terrorists in the future, but to put the emphasis not so much on dramatic military moves, but on increased spending on more intelligence agents, closer collaboration among intelligence and police agencies, and more penetration of terrorist groups.